



Gastronomy women in Spain get united against invisibility

November 12th, 2018. More than a hundred professionals, representing many others, met yesterday in Valencia to boost **the visibility of women in the gastronomy area in Spain**. The meeting was attended by chefs, sommeliers, producers, scientists, journalists, businesswomen and organizers of events and conferences, among other work profiles. Together they have agreed on the first steps to achieve progress in giving visibility to the work of culinary women in the country.

These measures include the creation of the first complete and updated database of women in gastronomy; create working groups by professional specialties and territorial areas, as well as launch a brand image to communicate all events, news, research or aspects of interest in which they participate.

The aim is to make visible the enormous creative talent in an environment of equality and, in addition, create a space for networking, collaboration and synergies that can promote new business, academic or scientific projects.

The meeting, held within the framework of the **Gastrónoma food event**, was opened by Purificación García Segovia, professor at the Universitat Politècnica de València, who presented the results of the doctoral thesis "Barriers and facilitators faced by women in gastronomy", which shows that among the 195 restaurants with Michelin star in Spain in 2018, only 10% are run by women.

According to this study, the male chefs get more recognition from the public and funding for their projects. However, there are no differences between men and women in haute cuisine when it comes to comparing skills or competencies. The conciliation is the main obstacle for them.

One of the chefs that has claimed more presence for women in the culinary congresses and events has been María José San Román, head of *Monastrell* restaurant, with a Michelin star and one of the architects of this protest meeting: "*We are many and we also have the support of Carme Ruscalleda; Elena Arzak, Fina Puigdevall, Susi Diaz, Macarena De Castro, Esther Manzano, Mari Carmen Velez or Beatriz Sotelo, among others. Invisibility is ingrained and invisible talent discourages future generations. It is a global problem whose change we can lead from Spain.*"

Some of the solutions against invisibility were identified during the meeting: the **promotion of corporativism** and the **creation of a support network** among its members which is also conceived to show the value for professional activities related to the culinary world and which are even more ignored, such as shellfish gatherers, canning industry staff and a very big group of women working in the food industry, manufacturing small and valuable productions.

Different speakers have described their repeated experience as the only participants in events where most of the speakers were men, a fact that they have defined as "*the invisibility of invisibility*". In this sense, Silvia García, sommelier and head of the Mugaritz

restaurant dining room, said that *"perhaps the worst is the invisibility of female invisibility. No one realizes that we are invisible, it seems normal."*

For this reason, one of the conclusions of the meeting has been to ask their fellow chefs to reconsider their participation in projects where more than half of society is not represented.

The conclusions also include the need to create a network that helps women in gastronomy to boost their personal brand to break what was defined as *"glass ceilings"*, as well as encourage participation in competitions in which there is little female presence so far, what has been described as the *"cement ceiling"*, a level of self-rigorousness that prevents them from standing out.

Begoña Rodrigo, chef of 'La Salita', in Valencia, has encouraged everyone to face new challenges: *"Fear paralyzes us and thus we do not advance. Haute cuisine has its rules and either you take them and go for it, or you quit."*

In addition, other lines of action have been addressed, such as finding channels for receiving complaints and acting in cases of workplace harassment or encouraging mentoring so that women with extensive experience can advise and promote the talent and initiatives of the new entrepreneurs. Guillermina Bravo, editor of the book publishing company Montagud, stressed that *"we cannot wait for society to change. We have to lead the change."*

Furthermore, Julia Pérez Lozano, journalist and director of the digital publication *GastroActitud*, announced that a study on the situation of women in Spanish cuisine will be carried out with the support and collaboration of Ferran Adrià, in the framework of the future projects of *Bullipedia* and *Bulli Foundation*.

"We have a 20 years delay, but now is our time," claimed Rebeca Hernández, chef at the restaurant 'La Berenjena', in Madrid.

Mujeres en Gastronomía (MEG, meaning Women in Gastronomy) was born in Valencia as an ambitious movement, with national and international vocation and several milestones in next year's calendar. In this sense, several forums have been proposed to hold new meetings and continue a work strategy until the end of 2018 and throughout 2019.

Among the next appointments in Spain, the *Hospitality Innovation Planet (HIP)* congress, whose director Eva Ballarín, has offered a new meeting point for the month of February. Also the director of *San Sebastián Gastronomika*, Roser Torras, offered a space for debate within the 2019's congress to organize a new meeting of this forum. This meeting will coincide with the first anniversary of the birth of the female gastronomic movement.

For more information:

<https://mujeresengastronomia.wordpress.com/>
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/364315770973292/>